

# 1.0 GOALS AND THE NEPA PROCESS

This chapter discusses DOE's and the Service's goals for managing Rock Creek Reserve's natural resources and integration of NEPA documentation.

## 1.1 THE ROCKY FLATS ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY SITE'S MISSION AND VISION

The current mission of the Rocky Flats Technology Site is cleanup and closure. At closure, all nuclear materials and wastes will have been removed from the Site, all buildings will have been demolished, and any remaining contamination will have been remediated per the requirements of RFCA. Current plans call for this mission to be completed late in 2006.

The open space cleanup objective expressed in the RFCA Vision (RFCA, Appendix 9) serves as the foundation for the resource management policies enumerated in the 1998 NRMP. This vision anticipates that the Site will be cleaned up so that it can be used as open space or converted to other appropriate uses consistent with community preferences. DOE will manage resources during cleanup in order to preserve currently available options for Buffer Zone use, so that these options can be considered during post-closure resource management discussions.

## 1.2 ROCK CREEK RESERVE NATURAL RESOURCES PURPOSE AND GOALS

The purpose for the establishment of Rock Creek Reserve was to create an avenue for agency cooperation in the management of ecologically important natural resource assets which are not expected to be affected by the cleanup activities and restrictions imposed on much of the remainder of the Rocky Flats Site. The Interagency Agreement at Appendix 1 further defines this purpose.

### **General Rock Creek Reserve natural resources management goals:**

**Goal 1.** To cooperatively manage Rock Creek Reserve under DOE ownership to conserve, protect and enhance native ecosystems, plant communities, and wildlife species in a manner compatible with Rocky Flats' cleanup mission, including future public use parameters and existing real property interests.

**Goal 2.** Ensure the management of Rock Creek Reserve is compatible with the RFCA, the 1998 NRMP and all federal and State laws regulating the cleanup of Rocky Flats.

**Goal 3.** Cooperate with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to study and implement introductions of sensitive species.

**Goal 4.** Inventory, monitor, and manage soils, water, air, vegetation, and wildlife on Rock Creek Reserve with a consideration for biological diversity.

**Goal 5.** Ensure the management of Rock Creek Reserve is consistent with the protection of cultural and historic resources.

**Goal 6.** Implement this Plan within the framework of the Interagency Agreement developed between the DOE and the Service.

**Goal 7.** Protect and manage threatened and endangered species and critical habitat in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), NEPA, USFWS regulations and agreements, and other applicable laws or guidance. Consider species listed by the State of Colorado in the Plan.

## **1.3 PLAN AND NEPA INTEGRATION**

This Plan incorporates NEPA analysis and serves as an Environmental Assessment. This section describes the integration of the Plan with its NEPA documentation. The Plan incorporates by reference the 1999 Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site Vegetation Management Plan Environmental Assessment, in accordance with 40 CFR Section 1502.21 (CEQ NEPA Implementing Regulations), to “*cut down on bulk without impeding agency and public review of the action*”. Impacts from vegetation management practices are analyzed within that document, and it provides the impact analysis for many of the actions addressed within this Plan. Nothing in this Plan is to be interpreted as a diminishment of the policies, programs and projects as outlined in that Environmental Assessment.

### **1.3.1 Purpose, Need, and Rationale**

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is to identify and evaluate environmental consequences of implementing certain proposed actions in the Plan that have not undergone previous NEPA analysis, and to summarize concisely those that have. The NEPA determination will be summarized in a Decision Document as an appendix (Appendix 2, to be inserted upon approval). This integration satisfies the requirements of NEPA.

A discussion of alternatives is found within each section in Chapter 4 (Proposed Actions and Alternatives) and analyzed more fully in Chapter 5 (Environmental Consequences). Each management program is discussed under the contexts of selected management options, and other (not selected) management options, including the “no action” alternative when applicable. After five years the Plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

### **1.3.2 Summary Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives**

Management options that are consistent with existing policies, agreements and restrictions, and which still meet the goals of this Plan, were proposed. Alternatives that were not considered in alternative analyses sections include those which could compromise Rocky Flats’ cleanup and closure mission. Therefore, options such as unrestricted public access and recreation, which may inhibit the Site from performing its mission, will not be considered until special nuclear material is removed and completion of an Access and Recreation Study. Provisions are found within the Plan to address this issue for future consideration.

## **Proposed Action**

DOE proposes to fully implement the Plan, during 2001-2006 or until closure, in cooperation with the Service, to conserve, protect, and enhance native ecosystems, and threatened or endangered, sensitive, and native species. The Plan presents information on the management of natural resources on Rock Creek Reserve. It also describes the setting, defines land management units, and describes how the unit designated as Rock Creek Reserve will be managed to sustain ecological functions, to protect and enhance federally-listed and other non-game species, and support possible future uses. Major emphasis is placed on management practices to preserve the unique native plant communities, threatened and endangered species, and to minimize invasive species and restore the native plant and fish communities.

One of the proposed actions within the Plan that bears discussion in this section is to expand the boundaries of Rock Creek Reserve to include most of the Rock Creek drainage and additional areas of tall grass prairie. The entire Rock Creek drainage encompasses approximately 1500 acres, most of which occur on the Site. The proposed expansion would increase the total acreage of Rock Creek Reserve from 800 acres to 1700 acres (Fig. 2). The Service recommended and supports this proposed action. The proposed management options in this Plan will not change with the implementation of the boundary expansion. The expansion area does not include any known contaminated areas or eligible archaeological or historic sites (see Sections 2.1.7 and 3.6.1). The expanded area does include additional easements and a few structures, including a never-used landfill with a small support facility. The expansion would provide a more definable unit (watershed) for an ecosystem management approach.

## **Options Considered But Not Selected**

Individual project options create numerous combinations, each of which could be an alternative to the proposed action. Various laws, compliance documents, DOE regulations, funding, etc. prohibit the implementation of many of these possibilities. For example, building erosion control structures in endangered species habitat may not be a viable option due to public law and DOE policy. On the other hand, selecting management techniques for preventing and controlling erosion is an option, and there are many choices for accomplishing this.

The “options considered but not selected” will be discussed as alternative actions following each management section. Environmental Assessments do not focus on alternatives analyses as much as Environmental Impact Statements do; thus, discussions will often be general and brief.

## **No Action**

The “no action” alternative would be to manage natural resources on Rock Creek Reserve (both the 800 acre and expanded boundary option) as they are managed currently, without the additional guidance and options outlined in this Plan, and without the cooperative management with the Service. Compliance with laws and current management plans would ensure implementation of some programs but would ignore other options presented within this Plan. The “no action” alternative describes the current (baseline) conditions against which the proposed action and alternatives are compared.

### When “No Action” is the Preferred Action

Rocky Flats currently manages its Buffer Zone natural resources, including the Rock Creek Reserve area, under existing management plans. The preferred action is sometimes the *continuance* of the current management practice (i.e., no change to the current action), or “no action” and is designated as such throughout the Plan under the heading ***Preferred Action: No Action***. Often, the current practices are adequate to meet the goals of this Plan. To help prevent confusion to the reader as to whether a proposed change is planned, or when no change will occur, the no action alternative is referred to in the Plan as “preferred”, since “proposed” connotes a change. For example, in much of the inventory and monitoring section the no action alternative is the preferred action because of the completeness of those current programs.